

**TIRNO-10-R-RPR**

**Questions and Answers -- Second Round**

**February 5, 2010**

41. **Question:** Are you expecting the vendor to host the web solution or are you expecting the vendor to work with IRS IT staff to host it on IRS internal systems?

**IRS Response:** The online IT application will be hosted entirely by the vendor.

42. **Question:** The RFP mentions that certifications are good for three years, and can be renewed after that. What are the implications of this on fees on page 21?
- a. Is the Registration fee the 3 year price or the annual fee. If it's the latter, would it be okay to collect all three years upfront? Charging the amount each year can be a mess because lots of credit cards will expire by the following year.
  - b. Similarly is the Renewal fee the 3 year renewal price or an annual renewal fee that's paid for three years all at once?

**IRS Response:** For purposes of responding to the RFP, the offeror should provide proposed fees as set forth on page 21. Because all aspects of the program have not been finalized, both registration and renewal fees are requested for the life of the contract. The Registration fee should only be charged once (i.e., the 3 year price) upon initial registration. The Renewal fee should only be charged upon renewal (i.e., also a 3 year price).

43. **Question:** (Page 7, SOO, Automated Notice Issuance) With reference to Automated Notice Issuance, will the vendor be issuing notices and certificates with official IRS letterhead / or form numbers?

**IRS Response:** Notices issued by the vendor will be on vendor letterhead, not official IRS letterhead. Any forms, notices, certificates, screen shots, etc designed by the vendor for use by the preparers must be approved by the IRS before use to ensure compliance with applicable laws.

44. **Question:** (Page 7, SOO, Online IT Application, Automated Notice Issuance) Are vendors responsible for postage and associated supplies for "Welcome Letters", paper certificates, paper systemic notices, and any other paper correspondence with preparers, or will these items be provided as GFE?

**IRS Response:** The items listed are the responsibility of the contractor.

45. **Question:** (Page 7, SOO, Online IT Application, Automated Notice Issuance) Does the requirement to "Include a process for handling paper applications that will be inadvertently received by the IRS and shipped by the IRS to the vendor for

processing", apply to a single new paper PTIN application form, or is the vendor required to process both the new paper PTIN application form and older W-7P forms that may inadvertently be used by preparers and sent to the IRS?

**IRS Response:** The Vendor will only be responsible for processing its own vendor developed application form.

46. **Question:** (Page 21, Contract Line Item Prices) Are offerors free to propose alternative and/or additional fees associated with the Registration and Renewal process?

**IRS Response:** Yes, offerors can propose additional and/or alternative fees associated with the registration and renewal process.

47. **Question:** (Page 37, General Proposal Instructions) The RFP states "Proposals shall be submitted on single sided 8 ½" x 11" paper, with font size no smaller than 12 points." Does this font size apply to tables and graphics as well as text; or, may offerors use a minimum of 10 point font in tables and 8 point font in graphics?

**IRS Response:** A font size of 10 point in tables and 8 point in graphics is acceptable.

48. **Question:** (Page 37, General Proposal Instructions) The RFP states "Proposals shall be submitted on single sided 8 ½" x 11" paper, with font size no smaller than 12 points." May offerors use of 11" x 17" fold out pages for graphics or tables?

**IRS Response:** No, all paper utilized must be 8 1/2" x 11".

49. **Question:** Did the IRS engage contractors in helping to research, formulate, or review the objectives or functional and technical requirements? If so, would the IRS provide the names of these contractors and their role in supporting the IRS to offerors as potential teaming partners; or, would these contractors be subject to organizational conflict of interest restrictions effectively prohibiting them from participating in an offering?

**IRS Response:** The IRS is not willing to provide the names of any contractors utilized or their role in support of this program. To the extent that contractors are used, they will be subject to applicable conflict of interest rules regarding their participation in this RFP.

50. **Question:** Did the IRS engage contractors in helping to research, create, review or advice around requirements or other IT lifecycle work products associated with an internal IT solution? If so, would the IRS provide the names of these contractors and their role in supporting the IRS to offerors as potential teaming partners; or, would these contractors be subject to organizational conflict of interest restrictions effectively prohibiting them from participating in an offering?

**IRS Response:** The IRS is not willing to provide the names of any contractors utilized or their role in support of this program. To the extent that contractors are used, they will be subject to applicable conflict of interest rules regarding their participation in this RFP.

51. **Question:** p. 16 - under Remittance of Government User Fee it states: "The vendor shall collect this fee from the applicants and remit to the IRS daily through Pay.gov the previous day's collection of user fees."

Is your requirement to receive one bulk payment in Pay.gov each day from the vendor, representing the grand total of all return preparer registration and renewal fees processed the previous day? If so, is the preferred method of payment receipt from the vendor each day one ACH Debit?

**IRS Response:** Yes, the requirement is to receive a single bulk payment each day from the vendor. The preferred method is via ACH Debit.

52. **Question:** Storage & Bandwidth:
- a) What level of traffic can we anticipate in terms of each payment type credit/debit/checks used to pay these types of fees?
  - b) What are the possible documents (including number and size of each) that will be scanned and uploaded for storage?
    - i) Will individual preparers be uploading their own documents?
    - ii) Any other sources of scanned documents that will be transmitted or stored?
  - c) The RFP indicates the vendor is to "retain an electronic copy of all correspondence issued to preparers that is accessible from the individual return preparer's record."
    - i) Who needs to be able to access those correspondences, how often and in what format?
    - ii) What is the anticipated quantity/number of correspondence that will need to be retained and for how long?

**IRS Response:**

- a) The IRS is unable to estimate the level of traffic for each payment type.
- b) We expect individual preparers to upload documents, and do not anticipate, at this time, other sources of scanned documents. The IRS has not fully developed its needs around document uploading. However, the types of documents that may be uploaded can range from proof of address and foreign citizenship to documentation supporting claimed continuing education courses. The expected number and size of these documents is unknown at this time.
- c) The IRS would like the preparer to have the ability to access, review, print, etc. correspondence that has been sent by the Vendor. The IRS has no preference regarding available format to the extent that it is readily understood and user

friendly. The IRS has not identified a specific correspondence retention period, and the anticipated frequency and quantity of correspondence to be issued is unknown at this point.

**53. Question: Security:**

- a) Does the IRS need secure remote access to this system?
- b) Are there other agencies that will need similar access?
- c) Where can this be hosted?
  - i) Vendor supplied or at IRS facility?
  - ii) If the vendor subcontracts those facilities, must those and any other partnerships be divulged in the initial RFP response or can they be added and approved as identified?
- d) What types of security audits are required initially and on an ongoing basis?

**IRS Response:**

- a) Yes, in accordance with the Statement of Objectives – General IT Application Functional Requirements, the IRS does require secure remote access to this system.
- b) At this point, the IRS does not anticipate requiring any other agencies require access to the system.
- c) The online IT Application will be hosted by the vendor. However, NIST has a section that addresses Security Controls in External Environments. The vendor will be held to the same standard required to if the service were housed locally and there is the possibility of additional security controls being required based on the vendor's environment and the agency's level of trust. Should the vendor choose to subcontract the facilities, the sub-contractor must also comply with aforementioned requirements. The vendor can provide the IRS with this partnership information post-award for approval.
- d) Please refer to the Statement of Objectives, page 10 that discussed controlled access protections. Additionally, until such time that the technical solution is developed, the types and frequency of the security audits can not be determined. NIST standards and guidance must be implemented and adhered to by the vendor.

**54. Question: Interfaces and Data**

- a) Page 5 of the RFP indicates that address of record must be verified
  - i) Against what system? **TBD – Primarily, this will be based upon a records check process outlined in SP800-63 – “Verifies information provided by Applicant including ID number OR account number through record checks either with the applicable agency or institution or through credit bureaus or similar databases ...”**

ii) What is the format of that data? TBD – This is dependent upon the database that is used for the actual record check and can be identified during the design phase.

b) The initial PTIN load

i) What type of interface will be used to load/transfer this data?

There are several options but CD or DVD is the more preferred media. However, the IRS is open to alternative means of data transference.

ii) How is that data currently stored? Data is currently stored within a DB2 Database, which can load to flat delimited files.

c) Test Results

i) Are the Test results to vendor in electronic format? The RFP states that “Test administrator(s) will transmit test results to the vendor for association with the preparer’s PTIN account. Interface requirements between test administrator(s) and the vendor will be developed and coordinated by the vendor.”

ii) Do interfaces to those data sources need to be built? Yes, the vendor will be responsible for establishing interface requirements between the test administration vendor and themselves.

d) Reports needed

i) Are there a specific number of reports? TBD – as we are still developing a report requirements initiative which may be based, in part, on the overall IT solution proposed by the vendor(s).

ii) What is the general format and delivery mechanism? TBD – as we have many report option capabilities that we can ask a vendor to provide; direct report access to pre-defined “canned” and generated reports; Ad-Hoc whereby user inputs timeframes/criteria; Free-Form using any one of the multitudes of reporting products that access remote DB’s “create your own report” ... etc.

iii) Are ad hoc reporting capability a requirement? Yes, please refer to the Statement of Objectives section titled, Reports.

e) Will users need the capability to create additional columns and rows of new/manipulated data or just add criteria data to existing report queries? Yes, the IRS expects that specific report needs evolve over time.

f) Continuing Education Credits

i) Do the CE credits inputted by the user need to be validated/verified? Or is non-validation of the data what is intended by “self-certify”

(1) What is/are the source(s) of that data? This process has not been finalized, as this is dependent upon the definition and functionality of the self-certification process.

(2) What format is it in? This process has not been finalized.

ii) Will the system need to have historical data in place at rollout or will it be tracked post rollout? There will be no CE historical data available during rollout

**IRS Response:** Due to the format of this question, IRS responses are included in line. IRS response is in blue.

**55. Question:** Project Management

- a) What are the communication requirements from the vendor's perspective and how will that occur?
  - i) Pre-go-live?
  - ii) During project?
  - iii) Post after deployment?
- (b) Who or what IRS sub-agency will be providing the functional rules and regulations that drive the system?

**IRS Response:** a) There will be marketing activities at all three levels identified above. Specific marketing activities and associated communication vehicles will be addressed post-award. b) There is no single IRS "sub-agency" that will be providing the functional rules and regulations that drive the system.

**56. Question:** Clarifications on System Functionality:

- a) Continuing Education Credits
  - i) How are the Continuing education "rules" provided to the vendor and how are they maintained?
    - (1) Is there a manual or set of written regulations in place to govern this? How can we get access to it?
    - (2) What if any intervention is required when renewal is not authorized based on lack of CE credits?
    - (3) How are waivers of credit hours to be handled?
      - (a) By the System
      - (b) Manually by IRS or by the Vendor?
- b) Reversed Payments
  - (1) What is meant by the phrase "The vendor will collect payments that are reversed"?
- c) Updated Data
  - i) Which data elements will be updatable and by whom?
  - ii) Will the updates occur via file transfers or HCI (Human Computer Interface) pages?
  - iii) Do those updates need to be available and/or applied to other data stores?
- d) Issue alerts to IRS
  - i) What requires alerts? ii) How will those rules be provided and maintained? To be determined post-award.
  - iii) Can you explain what is intended by "Randomly select records for renewal audits"

**IRS Response:** a) Specific CE "rules" have not yet been finalized. This process will be formalized post-award. CE requirements may be waived under special circumstances such as health, military service, other absences from the United

States, and other compelling reasons. We expect the vendor to develop a process to collect this information and send to the IRS for final determination.

**b)** This means that it is the vendor's responsibility to collect any payments that are reversed for whatever reason after the PTIN has been issued and/or renewed.

**c)** This will be worked jointly with the selected vendor and the IRS post-award.

**d)** This will be determined post-award, and will likely evolve over a period of time. Based on criteria set by the IRS, periodically and/or on a pre-determined schedule, provide the IRS with a random listing of registrants meeting the identified criteria. As an example, audits may be initiated to randomly validate self-certified CE credits

**57. Question:** Support:

- a) Are the support center hours 24x7x365?
- b) Are there Service Level Agreements which need to be met or reported against?
- c) Will the vendor begin collecting fees as of Sept. 1 2010 via the system?
- d) What are the anticipated support issues that the vendor is expected to address in the 30 days prior to rollout?
- e) Who or what IRS sub-agency will be responsible for defining and updating the responses related to business function rules of the IRS?
- i) Will any agency be available to respond to escalated functional help issues?

**IRS Response:** a) The Vendor will identify support center hours. The IRS has not set forth specific requirements related to availability.

b) We will make final determinations post-award on specific service level agreements.

c) Yes, the vendor will begin collecting fees as of September 1, 2010.

d) We expect customer service functionality to be available such as electronic and toll-free guidance to the preparers.

e) There is no single IRS "sub-agency" that will be providing the functional rules and regulations that drive the system.

i) Agency points of contact to be established post-award.

**58. Question:** This opportunity is classified as a Full and Open/Unrestricted (no Set-Aside identified) yet there is a NAICS code indicated with a size standard of \$7M. Can you please re-confirm that this is a Full & Open opportunity (that Large Businesses are able to bid on this work) and, if so, what is the relevance of declaring the \$7M size standard NAICS code listed in Box 10 of the SF1449?

**IRS Response:** This acquisition is Unrestricted, with no small business set-aside.

**59. Question:** Will the Q&As be published – and if so, what is the deadline for submitting questions regarding this RFP?

**IRS Response:** Yes. As set forth in the RFP (Section IV, Paragraph 3.0, at page 40), "In order to ensure questions concerning any technical aspect of the solicitation receive a timely response, these questions must be received by the contracting officer at least ten (10) calendar days before the due date for receipt of proposals, and shall be in writing."